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Christening Pagans: Onomastics and Plot in Elizabeth Bowen's "Daffodils," "Her Table Spread" and "Look at All Those Roses"

Emmanuel Vernadakis

> Psychology... ethnology and *The Golden Bough* have concurred to make possible what was impossible even a few years ago. Instead of narrative method, we may now use mythical method. It is... a step toward making the modern world possible for art.
> T. S. Eliot, "Ulysses, Order and Myth[1]

1 According to threeEnglish Dictionaries,[2]it appears that a pagan either believes in many gods or believes in none. The above antinomy might account for the relevance of the term in the field of Irish studies.

2 As was the case with Wilde, Yeats, Synge, and Joyce, mythology often informs Bowen's fiction. Sometimes, it will be argued, her characters are modern variants of gothic stereotypes shaped out of classical archetypes.

3 "Daffodils"[3] is a story Bowen published at twenty-four. In it, Miss Murcheson, a red-haired[4] high-school teacher, goes back home on a spring afternoon to grade the essays on Daffodils her pupils have written the same morning. She sets about reading them aloud but finds they lack originality. Three pupils of hers happen to pass along beneath her window and she asks them in. She lectures them about their lack of imagination but then asks them to stay to tea. The girls refuse and leave Miss Murcheson alone, giving one another to understand that she has never really lived.

4 The story opens with the main character having just left her **High** school[5] and about to buy a bouquet of daffodils on **High** street[6]. Being on high altitudes, she is, then, expected to descend to some lower territory.

5 The emblematic flowers of the title that grow on the banks of Acheron and are highly appreciated by the dwellers of the underworld make the reader expect the character to undergo a descent into hell; all the more so as the "stream"[7] of "coins" Miss Murcheson counts out to pay for them evokes the *obolus*, the fare the spirits of the dead paid to Charon to ferry them over the river Styx to the fields of Hades.

6 In the next paragraph, Bowen succeeds in evoking a well-known episode of rape through a rather immaterial incident. "A gust of wind" whirls "[Miss Murcheson's] skirts up round her like a ballet dancer's."[8] The flowers "tapped and quivered against her face," so much so that several lines later her mouth is still "faintly acrid with spring dust and the scent of daffodils [is] in her nostrils."[9] "Spring dust" is the same as "pollen," that is "the male gametes or microspores of a seed plant"[10] which is a substitute for semen. The incident is then reminiscent of the rape of Persephone, re-enacted with Miss Murcheson in the title role and the daffodils playing the part of Pluto.

7 However the gust of wind brings about a shift from Greek mythology to late medieval tradition; for it makes the heroine feel "enticed into a harlequinade by a company of Columbines."[11] The reference is Italian *Commedia dell'Arte*[12] through eighteenth century British pantomime, from which the characters of Harlequin and Columbine are borrowed. While Columbine derives from "*colomba*," the Italian word for "dove", Harlequin combines in his name Alichino, a Devil in Dante's *Inferno*, and Hennequin, another devil in medieval demonology.[13]

8 At first sight the heroine's view of the incident as a harlequinade seems inconsistent in both classical and medieval contexts; for the character "enticed" by the Columbines should have been a man, Harlequin, not Miss Murcheson/Persephone. The wind clears up the situation, for by whirling up Miss Murcheson's skirt, it unveils a petticoat that warns the readers of an ambiguity in the character. Actually the displayed garment is chequered [14] and therefore suggests Harlequin's own chequered dress. Miss Murcheson ***is*** Harlequin "invisible to all eyes but those of Columbine;"[15] for, actually the daffodils are also "Columbines," as the heroine addresses them so later in the story.[16] Miss Murcheson is, then, an androgynous character, as can be detected in the ending of her surname (i.e. son). Her association with Harlequin – originally a demon- justifies her descent into hell, which, ironically, corresponds to a return to Tartarus; that is a homecoming on the level of both the story and its symbolism.

9 In the third paragraph the original classical frame of reference infused with more familiar, medieval elements takes on a definitely gothic tinge as the young woman gradually moves towards a Christianly connoted environment, dominated by "the Abbey tower" that "rose distinct and delicate."[17] The mythological references are smothered by a "light that cast no shadow" coming from "an indeterminate sky," a strange radiance that "was never sunshine."[18] Thus, although Miss Murcheson still descends into hell her descent is now described as a flight - that of a bat. "Conscious of her wings,"[19] she takes the "dipping road" towards an "inviting" dark and empty house[20] "as a bird swings down into the air".[21] The darkness of her house, as well as that of the underworld the house stands for, is reflected on the surname of the character. If it is pronounced Murkeson, its first phonetic component "murk," means "dark, gloomy, obscured by fog."[22] Miss Murcheson is therefore a "Son of darkness." If a [à] sound is substituted for the [k], her name evokes the root MERCH, present in such words as "merchant", a root deriving from Mercury, the Latin for Hermes, the "psychopompus," that is the god who led the souls of

the dead to the underworld. Then the schoolteacher is either the Lady of the underworld, or its Lord -- or both...

10 In the next paragraphs where the action takes place within the heroine's house, banality is so treated as to make it appear frightening. Miss Murcheson looks like a vampire and sounds like a witch when, to correct her pupils' essays, she dips "her pen in the red-ink pot with an anticipatory titter,"[23] while thinking "If I had a school of my own... I'd horrify them."[24]

11 Engulfed, as it were, by the gothic, the classical frame of reference is buoyed up with the arrival of the girls. Their laughter -- "the laughter of the **High** School"[25]-- awakens Miss Murcheson who meanwhile has fallen asleep. As opposed to their teacher, the girls are associated with open nature and light, and therefore embody freedom, lack of concern, and life. Like Flora Hopwood, another high school girl[26], the names of Doris, Rosemary, and Millicent are also indicative of pagan rather than Christian values. Doris[27] is the alleged mother country of the Dorians, a district between Mount Oeta and Mount Parnassus; Rosemary, a plant that used to be called the Elfin plant, because it was sacred to the fairies, means "sea-dew,"[28] or "rose of the sea," a title once given to Venus.[29] As for Millicent, it is of Germanic origin and combines 'hard work' with strength, a tough image that is no longer associated with the name itself. A phonetic reading of it might then offer a numerical sense to its signifier (thousands and hundreds), hinting to the many-sidedness of the world to which the girls belong.

12 Miss Murceson's invitation constitutes a temptation for the girls. Actually, she would like them to adopt her outlook on life, and in terms of symbolism, to make them stay with her in the underworld. The temptation scene is again based on the former episode between Persephone and Hades,[30] with the difference that now Miss Murcheson is cast in Hades' part. Like Hades, she uses the lure of flowers to entice her victims, a lure that proved most effective with her:

> 'What a pretty photograph Miss Murcheson.' (...)'You look so different, (...) Awfully happy and prosperous and - cocksure.' (...) As a matter of fact' she enlightened them, 'that was because of daffodils (...) Somebody had just given me a great big bunch (...) I wonder if daffodils will ever make any of you look like that.' 'It depends, you see' said Millicent, astutely. 'Nobody has ever given us any. If they did perhaps-' 'Really?' said MissMurcheson (...) 'Take all those (...)I'd like you to.' She gathered the daffodils together and lifted them, dripping from the vase. The girls retreated.[31]

13 As the daffodils prove ineffectual with the girls, she tempts them with food.

> 'Won't you stay to tea?' she asked. Oh do. We'll picnic; boil the kettle on the gas-ring, and eat sticky buns. We'll have a party in honour of the daffodils.'[32]

14 The reference here is Hades offering one, three or seven seeds of pomegranate to Persephone who ate them[33]. This prevented her complete return to the upper world. The girls refuse and red-haired Miss Murcheson's efforts remain fruitless. The girls, the reader expects, will live their own lives instead of being victims of their vampire-like instructor. A fiendish merchant of knowledge, Miss Murcheson who also epitomises the dark enlightenment of education is a death figure whom Bowen might as well have called *Miss Murderson*.

15 The archetypal figures of the tempter and the tempted, the irrational maiden, the underlying eleusinien myth of death and regeneration and the motif of a "dinner-in-the-underworld," are recurrent in Bowen's Stories. They all find their way in "Her Table Spread," a story first appeared as "A Conversation Piece"[34] in 1930. Here a formal dinner

acts as a substitute for the previous informal tea-party; however, the diabolical figure is not merely a woman. Miss Murcheson's Titian redness of hair integrates Mr Rossiter's name - *rosso* is Italian for red. But if red stands for infernal virtues, it is perhaps through the line of ancestry that it is passes on to Valeria, Rossiter's grand-niece, as suggests her "red-satin dress cut short"[35] associated with her loud and infernal laughter. Still, in contrast with the three girls who resist temptation in "Daffodils," Alban, who stands for the victim, *does* consume the food he is offered in "Her Table Spread."

16 The action is set in a castle on a remote Irish Island owned by Valeria Cuffe, an Irish heiress. Her great uncle, Mr Rossiter, a Machiavellian figure, tries his best to marry her off to a dull Englishman of high-birth and in bad straits, so as not to lose the privilege of sponging on her together with his niece, Miss Treye, and his niece's "attachment," Miss Carbine[36]. For that purpose, he has arranged a dinner for Alban, a suitor who has come all the way from London. While Valeria "is still detained in childhood,"[37] Alban has not reached manhood.[38] He has "failed to love,"[39] has a negative attitude toward women, "but in particular he [is] not attracted to Valeria."[40] However, it is unfortunate for him that his coming coincides with the anchoring of an English battleship in Valeria's estuary. The heiress, who evinces appetite for manhood, fancies

> ...all the navy" come "up the estuary (...) Her estuary would be filled up, like a regatta, with loud, excited battleships tooting to one another and flags flying.[41]

17 Alban appears then quite an unsuitable suitor. Valeria would definitely prefer Mr Garret or Mr Graves, two navy officers who are reported to have shown up the previous spring, the first time the destroyer came to anchor on the island:

> 'We were all away at Easter. Wasn't it curious they should have come then? The sailors walked in the demesne but never touched the daffodils.' (...) 'Moral too good,' stated Mr. Rossiter.[42]

18 The story is set in mid-summer;[43] it dramatises the belated encounter between Valeria and Alban who respectively stand for Ireland and England. Time has gone by and, perverted by the past, they seem to have "missed their chance."[44] However, old Mr Rossiter who "was not what he seemed,"[45] will eventually arrange an ultimate occasion for them to unite – in hell. And to Bowen, hell is the past and the past is fiction.

19 From the past, Valeria has inherited a pagan satus: an island "of almost Italian brilliance," [46] a Latin name and a "statuesque development."[47] She also possesses three idols[48] of Roman making. Like Mrs Trey and Miss Carbine, she is connected to a remote pagan past Ireland has often endeavoured to claim. This is perhaps what accounts for all three ladies' attraction to the "Mediterranean fleet."[49]

20 Alban reflects Albion's Christian past for he is aptly named after England's Saint Patrick.[50] His "whiteness" (from *albus*, white in Latin) fits his mild manner, distressing purity, and lack of character. Curious, conceited and eccentric, he shows an interest in irrational phenomena: "A degree of terror was agreeable to his vanity: by express wish he had occupied haunted rooms."[51] His headiness and curiosity will be both his undoing and his triumph.

21 A "gothic" character, old Mr Robert Rossiter opposes his fiendish redness to Alban's hallowed whiteness. His name restates Rob Roy's,[52] Walter Scott's red-haired outlaw, for both names mean "Robert the Red." If redness stands for deviltry, Robert Rossiter is also christened after Robert the Devil.[53] He is therefore connected with the Western spirit of conquest and the crusades. This makes him sensitive to (the symbolism of) the battleship whose coming he is the first to announce.

22 The arrival of the destroyer, a ghost out of a vague medieval frame of reference,[54] combines the above characteristics to a distorted fairy-tale pattern which makes Valeria a rather peculiar princess, the first ever to ***choose*** her Prince Charming. Closer to the sky (Mr Garret) or closer to earth (Mr Graves), she gives herself the choice between death in a garret or life in a grave.

> Valeria's mind was made up: she was a princess. Not for nothing had she had the dining room silver polished and all set out (...) They would be dazed at all she had to offer. – also her two new statues (...) When he and she were married (she inclined a little to Mr Garret) ... He would lead the other Admirals into the Castle and say, (...) 'These are my wife's statues; she has given them to me. One is Mars, one is Mercury. We have a Venus but she is not dressed.'[55]

23 Valeria's statues offer a key to her enigmatic status, since not only do they reflect the history of her family and estate[56] but they also embody the heiress's threefold essence. For actually Miss Trey, Miss Carbin and Mr Rossiter constitute a pagan trinity the pathetic heiress grows out of. Trade, the activity patronised by Mercury is echoed in the sounding and significance of Miss Treye's name, but it can also be determined in Valeria's name whose Latin origin, *valere,* means be worth.[57] Miss Carbine's name is that of a rifle and therefore conjures up the Roman god of armed conflict; just as the handcuffs present in Miss Cuffe's evoke a bondage indicative of a submissive type of relationship, also patronised by Mars. In addition, as a verb, to cuff means "to strike, especially with the open hand" and a "cuffer" is a fighter.[58] As Venus, the third statue, is undressed we understand she is not exposed but kept hidden. She might linger with Old Mr Rossiter, the matchmaker, a character "that" – as is stressed by the narrator -- "was not what he seemed."

24 In fact, after Valeria's wild leave to meet either Mr Graves or Mr Garrett, Mr Rossiter goes "to talk to the parlour maid."[59] He does so to pave the way for Alban's union with his niece; for when he takes Alban to the boat house[60] and tries to make him commit himself, [61] he talks to him "of women in general and the parlour maid in particular..."[62] However since Alban's "attitude remained negative,"[63] he takes extreme measures. Being more than a mere marriage broker, he is assisted by a bat that flies into the boat house and touches Alban's ear. This incident triggers off Alban's initiation into manhood by means of a climbing up to hell. Up there he is welcomed by Princess - or perhaps, it may be argued, by goddess Valeria...

> '*Bat*!' Alban squealed irrepressibly, and ... fled from the boat-house..."Hell," he said to the steps, mounting, his mind blank to the outcome... half-way up to the castle darkness was once more absolute...
> 'Hi' she croaked. Then: 'You are there! I hear you!'
> 'Miss Cuffe-'
> 'How too bad you are (...) I thought you were never coming-'
> 'Quietly, my dear girl-'

25 The meeting however, ends up in a misunderstanding.

> ...Valeria hurried to him. ' Mr Garrett-' she panted... I'm Miss Cuffe. This is my Castle.' ...Mrs Trey said to Miss Carbin under her breath, 'Mr Garret has come.' Behind through the Windows, Mars and Mercury, unable to contain themselves, stooped from their pedestals.

26 Still, it is a revealing misunderstanding as Alban, mistaken for Mr Garret, draws admiration and expectancy which acts miraculously upon him and makes him come to manhood.

> Their unseen faces were all three lovely and ...such a strong tenderness reached him that, standing there, in full manhood, he was for a moment not exiled.[64]

27 Apparently it required some time for the kiss of the bat to affect Alban; but eventually it did. The statue of the love goddess, who presides over the encounter between Alban and Valeria and sees to it that it is crowned with success, is then hidden within Old Mr Rossiter, "who was not what he seemed." However, Valeria, too, harbours a love goddess within her. If we wish to unveil her, as Alban must have certainly done, we merely have to invert the sounding of Valeria's surname, Cuffe[65] [kvf], into an anagram [fvk].

28 Still, not everything seems to have worked out according to Mr Rossiter's speculations. It is, of course, understood that Alban, who accepted the food he was offered, is sure to stay with them for a while. Still, after the reading of the closing paragraph it may be suspected that Alban's coming to full manhood produced a more radical effect than that expected by Rossiter. If the kiss of the bat turned Alban into a vampire, he must be held responsible for Valeria's "laying with her arms wide," for Mr Rossiter's laying "insensible" in the boat-house and for the disintegration of the "extinguished Castle." In this case Alban, may be himself the hanging bat "masked in its wings" with which the story closes.[66] Well initiated into full manhood the pupil has outdone the instructor. Not only has he become a "real" hero in the gothic world of his fancy, that is a vampire, but he has also helped his betrothed to join her fancy universe of fairy tales by turning her into a Sleeping Ghoul.

29 In "Her Table Spread" Bowen questions the possibilities of harmonious existence between two persons whose lives and pasts have shaped their individualities incongruously. In "Look at all Those Roses," published eleven years later,[67] the relations between men and women still offer a ground for competition. The rashness of the age toward change is opposed by a new lapse into the past; the same archetypal characters, the persisting motif of flowers as a means of luring and the odd eleusinian myth combine with the same classical, fairy tale and gothic frames.

30 By a late June Monday afternoon[68] Lou and Edward, an unmarried couple,[69] are on their way to London. Lou, a rather exclusive character, is "attracted by calmness"[70] out of mere fear of losing Edward to whom she also clings "largely out of contentiousness"[71] This makes her comply with his wishes and never risk "displeasing Edward too far."[72] On the other hand, Edward, an "Edwardianly" professional writer, is a definitely outgoing person [73] who complies with the requirements of the age of rapid technological change in which he lives. Always in a hurry,[74] he is devoted to his car as much as to Lou.[75] He likes tracing routes and making arrangements and disapproves of Lou starting up "fantasies"[76] about matters that do not agree with his temperament.

31 For all their differences, Lou and Edward form a rather conventional couple. However, their names reveal what is at stake in their –-less conventional -- story. Lou is short for Louise, a name of German origin whose full form means "a famous warrior." Curtailed to Lou, it sounds rather unattractive to those who might make an association with the homophonous "loo." Edward is an old English name deriving from "ead" meaning "prosperity" and "weard" meaning guard. It suggests a person who is a good guardian of what he owns, and implies that he has something worth guarding in the first place.[77]

32 The story features, then, two characters embodying the notions of having and being. While Edward is identified by his possessions, that is his car and Lou often and again associated with the car,[78] Lou, who actually *might* have been characterised by what she is –i.e. Louise --, is negatively defined by what she is *not.* By never risking to displease

Edward too far she is not the "famous warrioress her full name announces, but someone reduced to a lower state of existence, as her anxiety and submission to Edward indicate. Then the point is to know what might happen if Edward were deprived of his holdings and Lou got hold of the missing half of her full name.

33 Edward had traced "a curious route"[79] for their return to London, through a "relentless, pointless and unwinding...country"[80] that stretched flat and deserted "under a vacant sky."[81] Bare of elements that might evoke male presence, the place is as hostile to Edward as it is propitious to Lou. For, actually, after a breakdown, "a special attack on them,"[82] it dispossesses Edward of his car and endows Lou with Edward's former capacity for making plans. On losing his car, Edward turns to ask what she would suggest doing; "to his surprise (and annoyance) she had a plan ready." She suggests that they should walk to a house they had noticed as they drove past it and ask for help. It had gables and stood like a Grecian temple at the far end of a rose garden.

34 The house waits for them, as it were, in its "sheath of startling flowers,"[83] "like a trap baited with beauty, set ready to spring."[84] By stepping into it, like Hansel and Gretel, whose story serves as a model to this episode, Edward and Lou enter the realm of metafiction and of witchcraft, a world which is again based on classical mythology.. Still, in the exclusively female universe of the rose-house, there live two witches, not merely one.

35 Mrs Mather, "a shabby amazon of a woman, with a sculptural clearness about her face"[85] who answered their cough at the door, is of no help for Edward. He will have to walk to the village to arrange for their return; however, in the meantime Lou can stay for tea, she suggests.

36 Lou goes "deeper" into the chthonic setting of a "long, low and narrow parlour with a window at each end," where she introduces herself "to the nerve and core"[86] of the house, Josephine, Miss Mather's invalid daughter. The girl, who lies flat in a wicker invalid carriage, informs Lou that her father, who has now gone, has maimed her. This, perhaps, accounts for an ill will the girl shares with her mother to whatever evokes a male presence. This disposition has rubbed off, as it were, on the landscape and indoor setting. [87] However, Josephine is not surprised at seeing Lou.

> 'You must wonder who I am?'
> 'I don't now; I did when you drove past.'
> 'Then our car broke down.'
> 'I know, I wondered whether it might.'
> '(...) Then you put the evil eye on it.'
> The child ignored this.[88]

37 Can it be that Josephine puts spells on and brings in strangers who drive past the house? While Mrs Mather, currently busy in the kitchen, sees to the rest of it? Whatever the case, Josephine asks Lou to stay with them.

> Perhaps your husband (...) will lose his way. (...) When people go away they sometimes quite go (...) If they always come back then what is the good of moving?
> 'I don't see the good of moving.'
> 'Then stay here.'[89]

38 Although Lou should feel satisfied in so calm a house, she does not; instead, she looks round the room "to make sure it was ordinary"[90] and fancies that "Mr Mather lay at the roses' roots..."[91] When tea is served,

> [Mrs Mather] slit the top paper off a jar of jam. 'This is my last pot of last year's damson,' she said. Please try some.

39 The suggestive blood-red colour of the jam spread over a slice of bread and devoured "in a calmly voracious way" by Mrs Mather, hints at some rather singular eating habits. The Hansel and Gretel underplot and the notorious hostility of the place to man,[92] together with Josephine's confession that Lou was the "first new person [she had] seen for a year," lead one to sugest that the damson the blood-red jam was actually made of is a possible masculine form for "damsel."

40 However, Lou has tea but refuses food. This makes Josephine say, "She thinks if she eats she may have to stay here for ever."[93] If it cannot be asserted that Josephine is Persephone, there is no doubt her statement has been uttered in the underworld...

41 To make a short story not that long, "Look at All those Roses" is based on an Orphic account of the myth of Hecate,[94] the lady of the moon who is also regarded as "the mystic Persephone."[95] Accordingly, the moon goddess[96] and sorceress has a younger counterpart in the person of Iphigenia[97] -- whose name is almost an anagram of Josephine. Iphigenia was sacrificed by her father but ultimately rescued by Artemis, the goddess of the chase, also the moon, who brought Iphigenia in Tauris[98] as a priestess to her local temple.[99] There she gave her the charge of sacrificing foreign visitors. According to Pausanias, Artemis re-named Iphigenia "Artemis of the Road" or" Hecate the Younger."[100] In Bowen's story, where Josephine is Persephone/Hecate[101] and her mother Demeter[102]/ Artemis, the former elements find their way through the symbolic use of the moon.

42 The outsiders connected with the house are exclusively referred to as "servants";[103] then, the house with gables must be a Greek-like temple and the women served in it, as their surname suggests, matriarchal goddesses. Mrs Mather's current servant "is not very clear in her mind." Does this imply she is a lunatic? If so the temple is dedicated to the cult of two moon goddesses. This accounts for Artemis/Mrs Mather's interest in and Josephine/ Hecate's attraction to Lou. For the full form of Lou's maimed name might also be "Luna." The more so as the story happens on a Monday-- that is a moon-day.

43 Being half way between the sun and the earth, the moon partakes of both male and female nature; just as the "a" of "Father" indicates about the two women's makeup by finding its way in "Mather," the moon goddesses' earthly name. There is perhaps, a symbolic counterpart for the "a" of "Father." In the exclusively feminine environment of the sitting room everything is at rest but for a canary whose constant "springing to and fro in its cage" is not in keeping with the rest of the setting. The bird's unsettledness suggests Edward's restlessness as opposed to Lou's --and the Mather's -- affinity to calmness. Still as "a bird" is euphemistic for the vagina,[104] the canary's agitation also indicates Josephine's state of heart. "Lou kept clinking her spoon against the teacup; every time she did this the canary started and fluttered."[105] Expressing a genuine characteristic of Edward's and being associated with Josephine's feelings towards Edward's possession, the canary may also stand for what Josephine deprived Edward of by working the breakdown: his "male" power previously represented by the car.

44 The next section of the story is devoted to a symbolic union between Josephine and Lou. She wheels Josephine out into the garden where she lays a bouquet of roses at the feet of her carriage together with the knife she used to cut them. Then she unfolds a red handkerchief over the girl's eyes and lies on the earth next to her "pretending" they "are both asleep."[106]

> At first she was so nervous, she thought the lawn vibrated under her spine. Then slowly she relaxed. ... She let go, inch by inch, of life, that ... she had been clutching so desperately, her obsession about keeping Edward. ...Now I want nothing; I just

> want a white circle. The white circle distended inside her eyelids and she looked into it in an ecstasy of indifference...

45 The full moon works a change in Lou's character. When at the end of the epiphany, Edward comes back to fetch her, Lou's anxiety has gone from her and passed on to Edward.

> 'What, have you been anxious?' Said Lou curiously. 'It's a nervy day,' said Edward, with an uneasy laugh.[107]

46 Eventually the couple gets back to London together; however, while Lou takes some of Josephine's power off with her, Josephine has kept back Edward's -- car. It will be for her mother, perhaps, soon to make more jam...

47 Yeats' romantic campaign to provide Ireland with a new religion based on myth is not unrelated to Bowen's own romanticism. However,[108] Bowen is more attracted to the historical, psychological, and anthropological properties of myth than to its religious dimension. Her stories may read as ironic anthropological fantasies. To her, myth is a mode of "literary allusion,"[109] a wink at the reader intimating that the same account that applied to societies in a remote past also applies to ours. Persephones, Murchersons, and Mathers can be lying in wait for their preys on every street corner. So does the past whose dangers and ambiguities she endeavours to expose not merely as a prophet, but as an introducer, an usher into the world of fiction. Then, while in her stories Elisabeth Bowen christens pagans, it is only with the intention of "paganising" Christians.

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NOTES

1. Dial, LXXV, 1923, p. 483.

2. "A person (especially in ancient times) who is not a believer in any of the chief religions of the world, especially not in one's own religion; (Used especially of the ancient Greek and Romans) a person who believes in many gods. *Longman Dictionary of English Language and Culture*, New Edition, 1998. From Latin, country dweller, from *pagus* country district; akin to *pangere* to fix; Heathen; an irreligious person." *Webster's Seventh New Collegiate Dictionary*. "...A non-Christian; a follower of a polytheistic or pantheistic religion." *The New Shorter Oxford English Dictionary,* 1993.

3. In *Encounters* 1923. All quotations are from Elizabeth Bowen, *The Collected Stories*, Penguin, 1980.

4. "I'm rather a cult, they appreciate my Titian hair." p. 23.

5. "...how ever can one, teaching at a **high** school? Miss Peterson would-" p. 23, my emphasis.

6. "Miss Murcheson stopped at the corner of the **High** street..." p. 21, my emphasis.

7. "She counted out her money pouring a little stream of coppers from her purse into the pal of her hand."

8. p. 21.

9. p. 21.

10. "(...), or the male cone of a gymnosperm." *The New Shorter Oxford English Dictionary*, p. 2276, hereafter, *Oxord*.

11. p. 21.

12. The Commedia dell'Arte was popular from the 16th to the 18th century and its repertoire relied upon improvisation. Harlequin is a mischievous and simpleminded character "who is set curious tasks, tries his best but never fully succeeds." See Garr-Gom, p. 66.

13. B. Kirkpatrick (Ed.), *Brewer's Concise Dictionary of Phrase & Fable*, Cassell, London, 1992, p. 481. Hereafter *Brewers*.

14. "...her display of chequered moirette petticoat..." p. 21.

15. *Brewer's,* p. 481.

16. "'How tight-laced you are, poor Columbines,' she said..." p. 22.

17. p. 21.

18. p. 21.

19. "...forgetting all confusion she was conscious of her wings. She paused again to hitch up the bundle of exercise books slithering down beneath her elbow..." p. 21.
20. "She...could not resist the invitation of the empty house..." p. 22
21. p. 21.
22. *Oxford*, 1993.
23. p. 22.
24. p. 23.
25. p. 23.
26. Who has introduced a dictionary of quotations Miss Murcheson intends to forbid. p. 23.
27. *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica*, Vol. 4, 15th Edition, 1995, p. 186.
28. de Vries, p. 393.
29. Walker, p. 451.
30. *Homeric Hymn to Demeter*, Ovidius, *Metamorphoses*, V, 342-551. Pluto raped Persephone while she was having fun with her young friends on a meadow picking daffodils, and where smelling a wonderful lilly, she fell fast asleep. After a long period of vain efforts, Demeter, Persephone's mother, manages to have her daughter restored to her. Unwilling to part with her, Hades (also called Pluto) offered Persephone one, three or seven pomegranate seeds, which she ate. By doing so, she was bound to return to Hades every year and spend three months in his company.
31. p. 25-26.
32. p. 27. On the motive of eating food in the realm of the dead, Mircea Eliade says "Il s'agit d'un thème mythique largement répendu: celui qui goûte les mets de l'autre-monde, ne peut plus revenir parmi les vivants." Eliade 304, footnote.
33. *Homeric Hymn to Demeter*, 371, Ovidius, *Metamorphoses,* V, 532-538..
34. In *The Broadsheet Press*, on May.
35. "...red satin dress cut low, she attacked the silence with loud laughter..." p. 418, opening paragraph.
36. "Come in! Her aunt cried in indignation. She would die of a chill, childless, in fact unwedded; the Castle would have to be sold and where they would all be?" p. 420.
37. p. 418.
38. "A degree of terror was agreeable to his vanity: by express wish he had occupied haunted rooms. (...) Wandering as it were among the apples and the amphoras of an art school, he had blundered in the life room: woman revolved gravely..." p. 413.
39. p. 420.
40. p. 418.
41. p. 422.
42. p. 419.
43. "...some wet peonies glistened" p. 420. In Ireland peonies bloom in July.
44. A chance that had been offered to Valeria at "Easter," (p. 419); but she was off then. The Motive of Easter evokes death and rebirth, Bowen's resurrection myth, be it Christian or pagan. Between the lines there also seems to be an allusion to the parable of the Ten Bridesmaids ("The kingdom of heaven shall be compared to ten maidens who took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom..." Matt.25:1-12.) The story seems to parody the parable.
45. p. 420.
46. p. 418.
47. p. 418.
48. Mercury, Mars, and Venus, see infra.
49. "'Perhaps since then they have been to Greece, or Malta?'
'That would be the Mediterranean fleet' said Mr Rossiter.
They were sorry to think of anything out in the rain tonight.
'The decks must be streaming,' said Miss Carbine.

Then Valeria, exclaiming. 'Please excuse me!' pushed her chair in and ran from the room.
'She is impulsive,' explained Miss Treye. Have *you* been to Malta Mr Alban?'" p. 420.
There is a lurking innuendo; the "streaming deck" is, of course, "a wet deck," that is "a prostitute who copulates with one man immediately after another" (Holder, p. 400).

50. The British equivanent of Saint Patric. St. Alban was Britain's first martyr. "His feast is on 22 June, although the Church of England Keeps the 17 June." *Brewer's* 17.

51. p. 423.

52. Rob Roy just like Robert the Devil (see next note) are of Gaelic, not of English ascendancy.

53. Robert the Devil or Le Diable (?-1035), father to William the Conqueror, made the pilgrimage to Jerusalem. He became a subject of tale and romance. A Norman tradition is that his wandering ghost will not be allowed to test till the day of judgement.. *Brewers*, 871.

54. Going back up the course of history from England to Malta, to Greece (i.e. Rhodes), the destroyer's route follows that of the Knights Hospitaliers or knights of Saint John, an order that started by offering hospitality for pilgrims but which soon became predominantly military. The Holy City, where Christianity worked the miracle of turning pilgrimages into crusades, was their first headquarter.

55. p. 422.

56. p. 418: Although it is now "a peaceful residence" with "French windows" and "invasions from the water would be henceforth (...) perhaps **amorous**" (c.f. **Venus**), Valeria's castle was originally a **tower** with a **keep** (c.f. **Mars**). where, later "wings had been added" (c.f. Mercury, the winged god).

57. *C.F.* value: that amount of a commodity, medium of exchange, etc. considered an equivalent for something else." *Oxford.*

58. *Ibid*.

59. p. 420.

60. "The place was familiar to him" p. 423. The passage is pregnant with innuendoes ("'It's high time the girl was married, ...she is a fine oar,' said Mr Rossiter Wisely. ' It's a pity you don't want a wife.'") and homosexual hints ("'If that goes on...they (the sailors) 'll fire one of their guns at us.' Oh, no. Why? Said Alban. He buttoned up, however, the collar of his mackintosh." p. 423) It also echoes the boathouse episode in Forster's *Maurice.* Bowen, who knew Foster, might have read the manuscript.

61. "You'd be the better for a wife, d'you see, a young fellow like you. She's got a nice income." p. 423.

62. p. 423.

63. p. 423.

64. p. 423.

65. The surname Cuffe derives from Old English "cuffa,» or from Middle English " cuffe," meaning "mitten." (Reany and Wilson, 120).

66. p. 424.

67. In *Look at All Those Roses*, Gollancz, 1941.

68. "...a spell-bound afternoon with no shadows," p. 514.

69. A couple that "looked forward to nothing with particular pleasure," p. 512.

70. p. 513.

71. "...– her idea of love was adhesiveness." p. 515.

72. p. 513.

73. "He had no illusions about life in the country: life without people was absolutely impossible. What would he and she do with nobody to talk to but eachother? Already, they had not spoken for two hours." p. 513.

74. He is constantly after taxies or trains. "I must do something at once. We haven't got all night; I have to be back in London." p. 515 . "They had to be back by eight for Edward, who was a writer,

to finish and post an article." p. 512. "We'll take this taxi on and pick up a train. Come on, Lou, come on! We don't want to miss those people. And we've got to get that stuff out of the car." p. 520.

75. "The car, surely, Edward would not abandon." p. 519.

76. p. 513.

77. Room, p. 164, 316 and 306.

78. You've no idea what they said when they heard where I had ***parked*** you." (my emphasis) p. 520.

79. p. 512.

80. p. 512.

81. p. 512.

82. p.513.

83. p. 512.

84. p.514.

85. "The occupying inner life of this person was not for an instant suspended by their presence... She must have lost contact with the outer world completely." p. 514.

86. p. 515.

87. The country is bare of hills and the sun absent from" the vacant sky" (513). The house is stripped of sharp or piercing items. Also "She (Josephine) lay with eyes shut and forehead contracted, for overhead hung the dreaded space of the sky." p. 518.

88. p. 515-516.

89. p. 516-517.

90. p. 517.

91. p. 517.

92. Represented by Josephine's father, who is a criminal, and Lou's lover, a rival to Josephine who would like Lou to stay with her. Moreover, not only can Josephine not stand sunlight, but also the place seems to ban any item evoking male symbolism. The only exception is a canary, most likely standing for what Josephine deprived Edward of by provoking the breakdown of his car...

93. p. 518.

94. "Originally a Thracian moon goddess, she was absorbed as a Titan by the Greeks... She has the power of magic and sorcery and bestows wealth and wisdom. Hecate forms a trinity with Diana (Artemis) and Lucina (Selene)...She also forms a triad with Demeter and Persephone. (ANN, 179).

95. Bell, p. 164. A chthonic figure, Hecate shares power over the dead with Demeter and Persephone "Hecate has power over disembodied souls... Plutarch discusses the double release of the soul. First, the soul is separated from the body in the realm of Demeter – that is on earth; then the soul is separated from the mind in the realm of Persephone – on the Moon." Johnston, p. 36.

96. Johnston, Chapter III, p. 29-38.

97. Grimal, p. 236, b; Graves, 117b, p. 80. Gantz p. 26-7.

98. Tauris means "the country of bulls." Which accounts for the two "Swiss cow-bells, that hung on loops of string by the door" (514) and are wore by the two women in the house and garden so as to let the other know where each is (518).

99. See Euripides, *Iphigenia in Tauris*.

100. Gantz, 582-585. The function of slaying foreigners endows Hecate the Younger with the title "Enodia," an adjective meaning "the one of the roadways," used also as a substantive name for the classical Hecate. The same title is also used for Persephone and Artemis, indicating again dark, perhaps threatening marks in the goddesses' nature. "While "Enodia" most frequently is used either with Hecate's name or in circumstances where it clearly replaces "Hecate," other

goddesses came to use it, notably Artemis, Selene and Persephone..." (Johnston, 24) See also L. Robert, "La déesse Enodia en Thessalie" in *Hellenica* XI-XII, 1960, p. 588-599.

101. "An Orphic tradition calls [Hecate] the daughter of Demeter (fr. 41 Kern), and so too Kallimachos. This (...) might make Hecate seem almost a doublet of Persephone. By Contrast, Pausanias claims that the Echoiai equated Hecate with the Iphimede (i.e. Iphigenia) rescued by Artemis 1.43.1) ...Stesichoros followed Hesiod in equating Iphigenia with Hecate (215 PMG) thus strengthening the likelihood that Pausanias is here correct." Gantz, I, pp. 26-27).

102. The Greek styled house, Mrs Mather/Demeter the earth goddess confesses, "was a farm (...) an unlucky farm."

103. "Her maid had a bike bicycle, but had ridden home on it" p. 514. "Servants seem to find that the place is lonely... " p. 518 "'When does your servant come back?' 'Tomorrow morning. Sometimes our servants never come back." p. 519

104. Holder, 28.

105. p. 518.

106. p. 519.

107. p. 520.

108. Bowen was a reader of Frazer and Freud and Lacan...

109. A term coined by Andrew Von Hendy (see bibliography). Still "allusive technique" has been used to mean the same as "literary allusion" by Gerald M.Sweeney in *Melvilles Use of Classical Mythology* (Amsterdam: Rhodopi N.V.1975).

ABSTRACTS

Fondé d'une part sur l'onomastique et de l'autre sur la mythologie, l'article propose une lecture critique de trois nouvelles d'Elizabeth Bowen : "Daffodils", "Her Table Spread" et "Look at All Those Roses". Le conte des fées, la mythologie classique et le gothique forment le cadre triparti dans lequel se développent des personnages héritiers ou victimes du passé. À l'encontre de la réalité et pour ressembler à la fable, le passé est une création de l'homme ; il a, pour ainsi dire, « une forme », et de ce fait s'avère aussi menaçant que la fiction. Irlandaise protestante, Bowen invite ses compatriotes catholiques à connaître leur passé, à se connaître, afin qu'ils réalisent les dangers de ce qu'elle-même pratique avec ferveur : la mythification de la réalité.

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